

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
ALUMNI AND STUDENTS

OF

St. John's College, Annapolis, Md.,

DELIVERED 22ND FEBRUARY 1850.

BY ALEXANDER RANDALL, Esq.,
OF ANNAPOLIS.

ANNAPOLIS:
ROBERT F. BONSALL, PRINTER.
1850.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

ANNAPOLIS, 22ND FEBRUARY 1850.

HON. ALEXANDER RANDALL,

Dear Sir :

WE have the honor to inform you that, at a meeting of the Alumni of St. John's College, which was held immediately after the ceremonies of the Commencement of to-day were ended, the undersigned were directed to tender to you, in their name, their sincere thanks for the able and interesting Address you pronounced before them.

We take pleasure in losing no time in discharging the agreeable duty assigned us, by thus tendering you the thanks of the Alumni; and ask to be allowed the expression of the hope, that no obstacle will interpose to prevent you from yielding, at a very early day, to the request they make.

We will take the occasion to add, that we are well assured that the early publication of your address, replete as it is with sound sentiments and patriotic principles, will be welcomed by many Citizens besides the Alumni.

We beg therefore that, at your earliest convenience, you will furnish a copy for publication.

We are, dear Sir,

Very Respectfully,

Y'r Obedient Servants,

BRICE T. B. WORTHINGTON,

THOS. KARNEY,

FRANK H. STOCKETT.

ANNAPOLIS, 27TH FEBRUARY 1850.

FOR Messrs. B. T. B. Worthington, Thomas Karney, Frank H. Stockett, Esqs.,

DEAR SIRs,

IN complying with the request of the Alumni, made known to me by you, desiring for publication a copy of the Address I delivered before them and the Students of St. Johns, let me assure you that I feel sincerely grateful for the complimentary terms in which they and you regard it—the more grateful, because I feel it is to kindness and friendship, in a great degree, that I am to ascribe them.

Very Respectfully,

I am Your Obed't Serv't,

A. RANDALL.

ADDRESS.

ALUMNI AND STUDENTS OF ST. JOHN'S :—

Although many years have elapsed since authority, exercised within these walls, has controlled my actions, yet I feel it has not lost its influence over me—and that is now manifested by this submission to what you have required.

Whatever may be our age, or various the sterner duties of mature life, the parental authority never loses its power over our conduct, or its tenacious, though tender, hold on our affections. So with the kindred claims of our "*Alma Mater*"—they come with parental associations—they bring with them motives of obedience though long unfelt—nay perchance forgotten—yet, when revived, speaking in tones which cannot be resisted, if they would—which will not be resisted, if they could.

"He that hath nature in him," the poet says, "must be grateful." Where should gratitude, except under the parental roof, or in the temple of God, find a more appropriate shrine for its worship than this? Here, where we first imbibed those elements of science and learning which expanded our faculties, and opened to us the great book of nature—solving many of her surrounding mysteries—elucidating more beyond them—and imparting to us twilight glimmerings of other spheres still farther and farther in the distance—and taught us, philosophically, to contemplate worlds unseen by mortal eye, whither the imagination alone can travel.

And beyond all, and better than all—here—where we were taught to collate the mysteries of this great book of nature with

those of the greater book of nature's God—and, unsatisfied with the revelations of the former—as ever will be the aspirations of the human soul—to look for those of the latter—"the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Your invitation can the less be resisted now, when the honors of our *Alma Mater* are fewer, and her prospects not brighter. This should cause all her sons to cling more closely around her—manifest more devotion to her—and decline no service she may impose upon them.

It was suggested that these very exigencies required this duty should be committed to talents and learning more able to set forth her many claims to the public patronage, and to encourage those who control her destinies, or instruct her sons—when a voice was heard rebuking that suggestion: "what is that to thee, follow thou me?"

I come, therefore, Alumni and Students of St. John's, in obedience to your call.

In your selection of one whose habits and happiness, since we here parted, to pursue our separate paths through life, have been devoted to the active duties of a profession, and not to the cultivation of general literature or science,—a design on your part is disclosed that the subject to be selected by him should aim rather at the inculcation of some principles of practical usefulness to the citizen, than of merely scientific or intellectual interest to the scholar.

Our position, here, confirms this view. This, is a seat of the arts and sciences—whose learned professors are wont, daily, to impart their varied knowledge to others—and especially to the youthful listeners around us—some of whom, have, this day, evinced, how faithfully these duties have been discharged—and how vain any effort of mine to aid them. But however humble one's life may be, so diversified are its pursuits, and so various are its incidents, that few attain the meridian of life without gathering, from observation and experience, some materials which may be wrought into wholesome lessons, to those who are about to enter upon its untried realities.

These considerations, and the national sentiments associated with this memorable anniversary, cause your attention, on this

occasion, to be invited to some reflections on the *Individual Responsibility of an American Citizen*.

Individual responsibility is ever commensurate with individual benefits and blessings conferred: "Where much is given, will much be required," is a principle connected with the enjoyment of all good—as well in the recompense required of us to make, here, to our fellow-creatures, as in the reward we are to receive hereafter, at the hand of our common Creator and Benefactor. This just and divine law, comprehends every condition in life—none escape its universal application—whether the talent committed be an empire or a hovel—the luxury and wealth of the rich man, or the poverty and misery of Lazarus—the inestimable privileges of the American citizen, or the degrading servitude of the despot's slave.

Its application to our civil blessings appears to be especially appropriate, because their enjoyment is confined to this life—and the only manifestation of our gratitude to our ancestors, for bestowing them upon us, is to fulfil their design in transmitting them, unimpaired, if not improved, to their posterity. And any failure of duty on our part will be the more inexcusable, because these blessings do not perish in the using, nor endure but for a season, as with earthly goods—but are enlarged and strengthened by our enjoyment of them—and may, and, we pray, will endure, as long as the earth remains.

In order duly to appreciate this responsibility, let your attention be called to some of these political blessings which we *do* enjoy.

Our country must now contain about two and-a-half millions of square miles in one compact form. Its extent nearly equals that of entire Europe. England—on whose dominions the Sun, it is proudly said, never sets—the reveille of whose martial music is one continuous accompaniment of the Sun, in his diurnal course—has not the extent of territory we possess.

Blessed with all the varieties of climate, soil and productions of the temperate zones—that division of the earth which has ever been inhabited by the most enlightened and moral nations—we have, within our own limits, the necessities, comforts and luxuries of life, in such variety and abundance, as never before were enjoyed by any people. We have afforded

us every facility in obtaining these means of support—every security against the famines which, in other countries, so often destroy our fellow creatures.

The inexhaustible products of the earth's surface, and the boundless treasures of her various minerals beneath, unite in offering us all that can contribute to the promotion of the arts and sciences, and to the happiness and greatness of an enlightened and refined people.

This country is so intersected by its bays, lakes and rivers, as to remove most of the inconveniences resulting, in a commercial view, from its great extent. And, what the bountiful hand of nature has not effected for us, the enterprise and skill of our people have accomplished for themselves—by canals, rail-roads and telegraphs—thereby introducing, for the first time, distant and separate waters to each other, and binding the different sections of our country together, literally with bands of iron.

Although many important works of internal improvement are now in progress, and many more in contemplation, whereby the facilities of intercourse between the different parts of this Union will be increased—yet even now can it be stated—that the intercourse between its extended extremes may be maintained more expeditiously than at its formation, or any previous period of its less enlarged existence.

An incident is found in the Maryland Reports,* illustrative of this subject. The court there decided that notice might be presumed to be given in Charleston, S. C., within ten days after its execution, of a contract made in Philadelphia. Luther Martin exclaimed: "None but an angel, on the wings of the wind, could give notice in ten days, at such a distance!" How far excelling even this supposed impossibility, are the improvements of our day? At present—mails and passengers, by sea and by land, connect these points in less than one-sixth part of the time which, fifty years ago, was deemed impossible by human agency.

Nay more—at present we have *angels*—though not celestial—yet literally *angels*—messengers—not on the tardy wings of the wind, but on the wings of the telegraph—millions of

*Harper vs. Hampton, 1 H. & J.

times swifter—to bear our messages. And a few minutes, only, are now required to transmit that notice, which this great man in his time, deemed impossible in as many days.

This very facility of intercourse, alone, was wanted, to bind our Union more indissolubly together—and to prepare our country for the indefinite extension of our forms of government.

The population of our country is now estimated at twenty-three millions. Twenty-six years hence, when we shall have completed the first century of our national Union, our population will have increased from three millions to fifty millions. If these same causes continue to operate for a century hence, it is estimated that our population will exceed one hundred and fifty millions—more than the present population of all Europe. The present unsettled state of Europe adds to these causes of immigration. Our recent acquisitions on the Pacific, have opened to the adventurous, of every nation, the richest treasures the earth has ever offered to their enterprise.

Add to these the facilities, hitherto unknown, for immigration, to the teeming millions of Asia's industrious and needy people, of which they are now availing themselves,—and then imagine, what cannot be delayed many years, the completion of the contemplated rail-road, and canal, connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, whereby these facilities will be incalculably increased, and our country made the high-way between Europe and Asia,—and bold, indeed, is the spirit that will even attempt to estimate this tide, this mighty flood of American immigration.

If true to our country, we have nothing to apprehend from this increase of population. One hundred and fifty millions in our country, will not cause its density of population to exceed that of the New England States—or to be half as great as that of the present enlightened portions of Europe.

Let them come! That spirit of our fathers which exiled *them*, has always sympathised, in their posterity, with the successions of immigrants that followed them—bidding them an ever-smiling welcome to our shores—as if, in the words addressed on a similar occasion, by the beautiful Tyrian Queen to Troy's exiled son :

“Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.”

This extensive country, and its extending people, are blessed with a government established and maintained by themselves—for the preservation of their lives, liberties, and pursuits of happiness—and never has any government more completely effected the objects of its formation.

Separated into many independent States, whose direct and internal governments, within the sphere of their powers, administer justice and right, in the words of our Constitution, “freely, without sale—fully, without denial—and speedily, without delay.” All these States united in one general government, “in order to form a more perfect union;” the powers of the whole people, in a consolidated form, having a comprehensive control over all subjects of general and international interest, executing, at home, the powers required for the government of all—and abroad, the powers required for the protection of all—we are, my young friends, and should never cease to be, the *united people of these United States*.

Such have been our country, people and government, for three-fourths of a century—such are the prospects now opening before us—such, we pray, may they be realized!

But, my young friends—all governments originate and are supported by human means; and what men can build, men can destroy. We have, then, no other means for the preservation of ours, than our ancestors had for its establishment—strong hands—bold hearts—and wise heads—an ardent devotion to the cause of liberty, justice, and morality—united with an humble dependence on *Him* who, alone, can bless the combined action of all.

Erroneous opinions prevail among us that the early settlements of our ancestors, and their successful establishment of the governments under which we live, were accomplished through some special agency of the Deity, endowing them with extraordinary wisdom, power, and patriotism; that these virtues no longer exist among *us*, their degenerate posterity—but were buried with *them* in their graves—and that all succeeding generations are more and more corrupt and corrupting—and that, sooner or later, these governments must terminate in anarchy or despotism!

These statements are untrue—and I trust these predictions will prove equally so.

Whether they originate in gratitude to those departed spirits, who have blessed not only their day and generation, but succeeding ages—or are attributable to the delusions which originate in the fables of the classical poets, teaching us that the gods came down, and founded, or maintained, or ruined empires, we need not inquire.

Better to take the instruction of one of these great classic poets—who directs us never to introduce the agency of a god, unless the object to be effected by it, require his interposition :

“Nec Deus intersit nisi vindice nodus.”

The early history of mankind, in most countries, is no better—often worse—than that which succeeds it. If the first man born into the world killed the second—his own brother—how lamentably few must have been the days of primeval innocence? The twin founders of Rome were thrown into the Tiber to be drowned, by their guardian and next of kin—and, though miraculously preserved, to lay the foundations of that city, yet were these very foundations stained by the blood of one of them—

“We heard, indeed, of golden innocence unrestrained ;—
A pagan tale.”——

The early history of our country, although it may be favorably compared to any upon earth, has yet many a blot upon its pages, which the patriots of succeeding ages may often have prayed the recording angel to drop a tear and blot out forever—but they still stand—and should ever stand as a beacon for our guidance, and a rebuke to our pride.

The truth is, the formation of this present government was the gradual development of natural and moral causes—for the most part unappreciated by the very actors themselves—which, sooner or later, would have produced the same effects—even if these actors had not then co-operated. The early settlers at James Town, Plymouth Rock, and St. Mary’s, never supposed they were laying the foundation of this mighty structure, when they fled from the persecutions of the old world to seek an asylum in the new—so, those who from time to time succeeded them, and built upon these foundations were not blessed, even with a vision, of what their efforts were accomplishing.

When our revolutionary fathers began their resistance to the encroachments of the mother country, they did not contemplate

the establishment of a separate government. They did not desire it—nay they sincerely protested against it—and not until about the time of the Declaration of Independence, did some of the States repeal their instructions forbidding this separation.

Let not this be misunderstood: No man feels a warmer gratitude to our ancestors than he who now addresses you—and nothing could be said by him indicating a different sentiment. His object is to resist the opinions that they were peculiarly endowed with qualities to establish our liberties—or that we are wanting in the means of perpetuating them.

These notions that any men, or set of men, held in their keeping the liberties or destinies of this people, whether they existed at the times of the revolution, or since, is unfounded in fact, and unconstitutional in form. It is a part of the errors among us which magnify, above their merit, the actions of our rulers—and degrade below their desert those of the nation; which impute all the responsibility of the government to the agents in power, and release from this responsibility those who place them there.

From the first settlement of our country to this day—it owes its power, its prosperity, and its government, to the independence, the intelligence, the energy and morality of its people—of its *entire people*—not of the so-called great men—not of the politicians—but of the masses of the people—the *nation at large*. And this same power, prosperity and government of our country, are to be preserved and perpetuated only by continuing to cultivate, among the *entire people*, this same independence, intelligence, energy and morality.

This is to be accomplished by the co-operation of all—extending wider and wider among the people the blessings of an enlightened mind, and of a purified heart. Let primary schools scatter, broadcast, throughout this land, their blessings—“and institutions for the liberal education of youth in the principles of virtue, knowledge, and useful literature, be promoted and encouraged”—in the words of our charter—“to train up and perpetuate a succession of able and honest men for discharging the various offices and duties of life, both civil and religious, with usefulness and reputation”—and much is effected to discharge our duty and to bless our country.

In the production of this important result, you, my youthful hearers, have your part to perform. You compose a portion of that generation who will soon stand where we now do—to assume the responsibilities of citizens of this Republic. Let the manner in which this duty should be performed occupy a few of our reflections.

Make it one of your first principles to devote all your faculties and powers to the improvement and happiness of your fellow citizens. It was a noble sentiment of a distinguished American “if you have but a day to live, devote it to your country’s service.”

To effect this object, my young friends,—store your minds with all the learning your college course will afford; though its utility may not, at present, be appreciated by you. Bear in mind this course has been completed by those who prescribe it to you. They enjoy the benefits of the studies—and can, therefore, confidently recommend them to you. Study faithfully, upon their recommendation—and, like them, may you live to reap the expected harvest. As the parts, separately examined, of any other structure of art, cannot be properly understood, or duly appreciated—and, until the whole are united, the design is not disclosed, nor its fitness admired—so the separate studies of your college course may not now be duly appreciated. You must complete the whole to know their value, and duly admire their worth.

In the world, as in the college, you will find that ceaseless vigorous exertions alone secure success. He who begins life expecting its visions of fancy to be realized—and that a succession of fortunate events will shoot up, spontaneously, in his path, for his enjoyment, will soon be sadly disappointed. The occasional efforts of those who dissipate their time, will terminate in the world, as in the class, with disappointment and disgrace. Whereas *there*, as *here*, the first honors and the richest rewards, are assigned to the patient continuance in well doing. Let “*Omnia vincet labor*,” be your motto.

Brilliant natural endowments may sometimes dazzle and astonish—but the steady efforts even of ordinary minds, sooner or later, will elevate their possessors above those who, in earlier life, began with brighter prospects and more sanguine hopes.

Like the meteors, whose sudden and brilliant course across the heavens may, for a moment, eclipse the steady light of the fixed stars, yet soon are lost in gloom and death—while the stars they had hid, again shine forth in their lustre, seeming but the brighter from the darkness succeeding the meteor's glare.

Study, especially, the history of your own country—and of your own countrymen. There is much so peculiar in what is American, that the history of the old world is comparatively unimportant to you. The foundations of our Republic were laid in the times of the reformation in religion and in government. Then men thought vigorously and acted independently. Think for yourself, with these great men and noble deeds before you, that you may be qualified to act for yourself—think and act for yourself that you may be qualified to think and act for others.

Value knowledge, whether acquired from men or from books, only in proportion as it is capable of contributing to the happiness of yourself and others.

Your exertions are not to be confined to the mere acquisition of knowledge. Endeavor by reflection and meditation, to appropriate all the knowledge you acquire to the improvement of your own hearts and minds. This food of the mind, like that of the body, does not promote its healthful action, and growth, unless properly digested and assimilated.

“ Knowledge is a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds ;
'Till smoothed and squared, and fitted to its place,
Doth but encumber whom it seems to enrich.”

We are bound not only to use our faculties, but to enlarge and improve them. The faculties are the talent committed to our care—the improvement is our contribution—what is required of us. Like him in the parable, we shall stand condemned, as wicked and slothful servants, if we but render back our Lord's talent.

When your studies here are completed—select some useful calling in life—whatever may be your condition in society. It is due to your country, by your own contributions to the commonwealth, at least to restore what you have taken from it. It is required of you by your God: “ Six days *shalt* thou

labor," is as imperative a command as any in the decalogue ; and is enjoined in imitation of Him who, "in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is."

Qualify yourself for the discharge of your calling, with the same system and study required in your classes.

You bear in your hand the seal of your "*Alma Mater*,"—study its emblem and its motto—they are her parting advice to you. Worthy of her—worthy of her sons. Let them accomplish their design. Upon its front, the temple of Fame is seen, elevated on a proud summit—far above the aspirant—with rugged rocks and pathless wilds between—whilst he, below, nothing daunted, with steady eye fixed upward, and bold heart and strong arm pressing onward, is ever encouraged by her Motto : "*Est nulla via invia virtuti.*"

When you enter into active life, bear in mind all the honors and wealth of the Nation are open to your acquisition. Thousands of her most exalted sons had not the advantages you possess. There are no other limitations upon you, than those which your own capacities and exertions impose upon yourselves. No privileged orders here to monopolize high places—no aristocracy here but of the intellect—no nobility here but of the heart. Here, emphatically, is it true, "*quisquis suæ fortunæ faber.*" Fortune may sometimes, in her heathen blindness, scatter her gifts among the worthless—and the worthy—without discrimination—but these are of rare occurrence in our country.

If this discriminating practical people were required, in our day, to personify this goddess, methinks she would not be described in the poet's language :

"On high, where hoarse winds and clouds resort,
The hood-wink'd goddess keeps her partial court.—
Upon a wheel of amethyst she sits."—

No! Her hood-winked eyes would be uncovered—and she, endowed with extraordinary powers of vision, would walk among men to reward them according to their worth—or, in lieu of this unstable *wheel*, be seated on a rock of adamant.

Thus prepared, my young friends, by education and profession, you go forth into your country's service. Here you find, in theory and in practice, that the people rule. Theirs are the

legislative, judicial, and executive powers, variously modified. Those who exercise this authority are the temporary agents of the people—with certain limited powers—under laws imposing corresponding restrictions upon the people themselves. The wisdom and morality, therefore, required for the proper administration of public affairs under our government, must be possessed by the people, generally—which, in other governments, without injury to their systems, may be confined to the few who rule. All here rule—all here, therefore, must be qualified to rule—else, just in that proportion as they are not so qualified, there will be a mal-administration of public affairs.

Each man has his part to perform in the discharge of these duties. Each man holds, in his own individual keeping, a part of the sovereignty of this mighty nation—for the faithful discharge of which he is individually responsible. This duty is to be discharged according to your own enlightened understanding—whether you go with the smooth current of popular opinion, or resist its torrent.

In the primary exercise of power, each citizen acts for himself. If all the nation differ from him, he still must do his duty, according to his own conscience—and if needs be, oppose the whole nation. This individual, independent, action of the citizen, in the exercise of his primary rights, is absolutely required, to secure our liberties—and is to be repeated whenever our vote or our voice is required in the discharge of these high duties. It may be called our duty as a citizen sovereign.

But you have equally important duties to perform of a very different character—duties, if I may so call them—of a citizen subject. Of a citizen, subject to the laws enacted by the people—subject to the rulers elected by the people—whether these laws or rulers meet with your approbation or not.

Great evils result from our failure properly to discriminate between these two different duties.—The duty of the citizen exercising his own independent power—and the duty of the same citizen submitting to the laws. And it is the glory of our system, when duly administered, that these two duties, apparently so opposed, do, in fact, harmonize, in such perfect concord. But, when the citizen, in the exercise of his sovereign rights, subjects his independence to any man, or party of men,

he is untrue to his country's trust. And so is he, whenever he refuses to submit, as a citizen, to the laws or rulers of the people constitutionally appointed.

Differences of opinion, as to men to rule, and measures to be adopted, will exist. It may be doubted if their existence does not produce wholesome influences upon the public mind, in eliciting that conflict of opinion so important in the investigation of truth. When these differences generally prevail, they produce combinations of citizens to effect the measures they prefer—hence political parties in the state.

If the end to be attained be worthy of their formation—we may, we ought, my young friends, to unite with those whose principles we approve—and aid, by our influence, to carry them into practice. But this is always to be done subserviently to the higher duty of promoting our country's welfare. And so soon as the principles of any party we have joined, are found to be at variance with the public good, duty requires us to abandon it. That ruthless, reckless spirit, which disregards the claims of our fellow citizens, and violates our obligations to our common country, in the pursuit of mere party victory, is unworthy of one who claims to be an American citizen. Party victory is to be won, and its laurels to be worn, that our *entire Country* may be benefitted, and its best interest promoted.

But, as citizens, we are not only responsible for our own conduct, but for the conduct of others who are influenced by our example. How ready and weak our excuses for the failure properly to discharge this duty? Who duly considers its fearful responsibility?

“Am I my brother's keeper?” was the vain effort of the first murderer to escape the responsibility of that relation in which his very inquiry assumes his Creator had placed him. We all are our brother's keepers—and, in an especial manner, does this apply to our civil rights and privileges, where all act on the rights of each, and each acts on the rights of all. All belong to the same political family—and share in the weal or the woe resulting from the acts of each of its members.

And here, too, let us never forget that all have some influence, no matter how small it may seem to be—it is not lost—it may elicit a spark which may kindle in a bosom the flame of patriotism that the whole nation may feel and bless.

Take an example in our own times. When the French Revolution of '48, burst, volcano-like, upon the astonished world—all restraints of society were broken loose—the worst passions of the worst men were at large—government dissolved—anarchy abroad in the land—each man left to his own undefined ideas of liberty—all in fearful apprehension of another bloody reign of terror. At that crisis a voice was heard above the tumult of the multitudes—arresting their attention : warning, entreating, persuading;—his country's and freedom's advocate. By his master-spirit the storm was lulled, and there was a calm—order was restored, a government established—and now a peaceful republic there exists over a free and mighty people. I need not add, this illustrious man is La Martine ;—or that his character was formed by the gentle influence of his pious mother—that mother's memory will be as immortal as the fame of her son.

Public opinion in this country is omnipotent. No man is elevated so high as to be above its influence—no man so low as to be disregarded by it. Its convictions and acquittals are without appeal or pardon—and none have ever the benefit of a new trial from its verdict. It is the basis on which our laws, constitutions, and governments, stand. How immensely important is it, that this public opinion should be enlightened—considerately formed—and deliberately executed. Yet is it the mere combination of individual opinions. Each man, nay, each woman and child, aids in its mighty effects. True, those whose elevated positions in society have the greater agency in its formation, have, of course, the greater responsibility—but all have their proper share—and the least is not lost.

Philosophers tell us that every voice uttered, produces vibrations in the atmosphere, which, however small, pervade the whole; and that multitudes of those slight vibrations combined, cause the most extensive agitation. So, often, in the political atmosphere, revolutions, the most extended and fundamental, are produced by the union of multitudes of men, whose individual influence never, before, was felt in the community.

We all have a part to perform in making up this public opinion. And here, as in our sovereign capacity, we must act independently; for ourselves, individually—and continue to act, yielding to no influences except the dictates of our own

consciences; until this public opinion is embodied in our laws, or the decisions of our courts. Then, as good citizens, whatever may be our own private opinions, we are to submit and to obey.

It is here an error exists in our country. We are too apt to attribute to the ephemeral, unascertained, and unascertainable public opinion, which floats upon the surface of society, and “is driven about by every wind of doctrine,” a high appreciation;—and, on the other hand, that long established, written, public opinion, embodied in the laws, is sometimes disregarded.

Take, for example, the crime of duelling—or any of those manslaughters, under extenuating circumstances, which sometimes occur. Though these crimes be condemned by the plainest and severest penalties of the law, yet, strange to say, to a certain extent, they go unpunished, because public opinion is not on the side of the law. Those who nobly avow their determination to obey the laws of God and man, in the matter, and to disregard this blood-thirsty public opinion, are not always exempt from the sneer of *some* who are not vulgar, or the scorn of *some* who are not weak. Do those escape responsibility who defend these practices, or admire these parties, though they, themselves, may never have taken part in a deadly strife? Is all the criminality to be visited upon the heads of those, who, goaded on by this corrupt public opinion, engage in the fatal conflict! Or is he who, alone, may survive, like the scape-goat of old, to bear away the sins of the whole people?

It cannot be, my young friends. All who countenance these crimes by look, word or deed—in the motive, or in the action, stand, in some degree, guilty of the blood that is shed, and many who are even ready to congratulate themselves that *they* are “pure of the blood of all men,” may yet find its stains upon their consciences, caused by their sanction given to, or not withheld, from this corrupt public opinion. And if ever that conduct contribute, in the least degree, to the fall of one they love, how poignant their grief?

“Keen will be their pangs;—but keener far to feel
They nursed the pinion that impelled the steel!”

This is only one of the many instances, in which we permit public opinion to be vitiated, by failing in our duty to correct its first prejudices.

To what other cause can be ascribed the vain threatenings of vainer politicians, north and south, to dissolve this Union—now heard throughout *this country*—which *that Union* has preserved and blessed?

At such a time as this, and on this memorable anniversary, it cannot be inappropriate to recall to your minds some of the parting advice of the Father of his country. Happy would be the result, if this Farewell Address of Washington were annually read, on this day, to his assembled countrymen! It combines the affection of a father with the patriotism of a hero;—the wisdom of a statesman with the inspiration of a prophet!

“The unity of government, which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence; the support of your tranquillity at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But, as it is easy to foresee, that, from different causes, and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken, in your minds, the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress, against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively, (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your National Union, to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable, attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.”

“ * * * * * You have, in a common cause, fought and triumphed together: the independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.”

The last *Advice to his Country*, of James Madison, who, more than any other man, deserves the appellation of the Father of the Constitution, contains too precious a legacy to be here omitted :

“ADVICE TO MY COUNTRY.”

“As this advice, if it ever see the light, will not do it till I am no more, it may be considered as issuing from the tomb, where truth alone can be respected, and the happiness of man alone consulted. It will be entitled, therefore, to whatever weight can be derived from good intentions ; and from the experience of one who has served his country, in various stations, through a period of forty years ; who espoused in his youth, and adhered through life, to the cause of its liberty, and who has borne a part in most of the great transactions which will constitute epochs of its destiny.

“The advice nearest to my heart, and deepest in my convictions, is, that the ‘*Union of the States*’ be cherished and perpetuated. Let the avowed enemy to it be regarded as Pandora, with her box opened, and the disguised ones, the serpent, creeping with his deadly wiles, into paradise.”

Among the many appropriate decorations of the Capitol at Washington, nothing should more attract our attention than two beautiful white marble carvings in the Senate-chamber.

One of these represents a seated gigantic figure—holding in his parted hands the ends of a bundle of staves bound together—as the ‘*fascēs*,’ borne before the Roman consuls, used to be—now an emblem of our country’s power. These staves, thus bound together, the strong man, against his uplifted knee, in vain strives to break—their *united* strength resists all his efforts.

The other sculpture represents these same *fascēs dis-united*—their bond of union broken—and a group of thoughtless children, snapping them, *singly*, asunder—and sporting with their scattered fragments.

O ! what a solemn warning do these silent emblems ever proclaim to those who sit in that hall ? To all—who, in that Capitol, represent this *now powerful*—because *united* people.

May that warning be heard and heeded throughout all time, and the catastrophe they prefigure be forever averted !

Often, before, *have* these warnings of our Fathers *been heard and heeded* by the American *People*—and *their patriotism* has borne them triumphant through more troublous times.

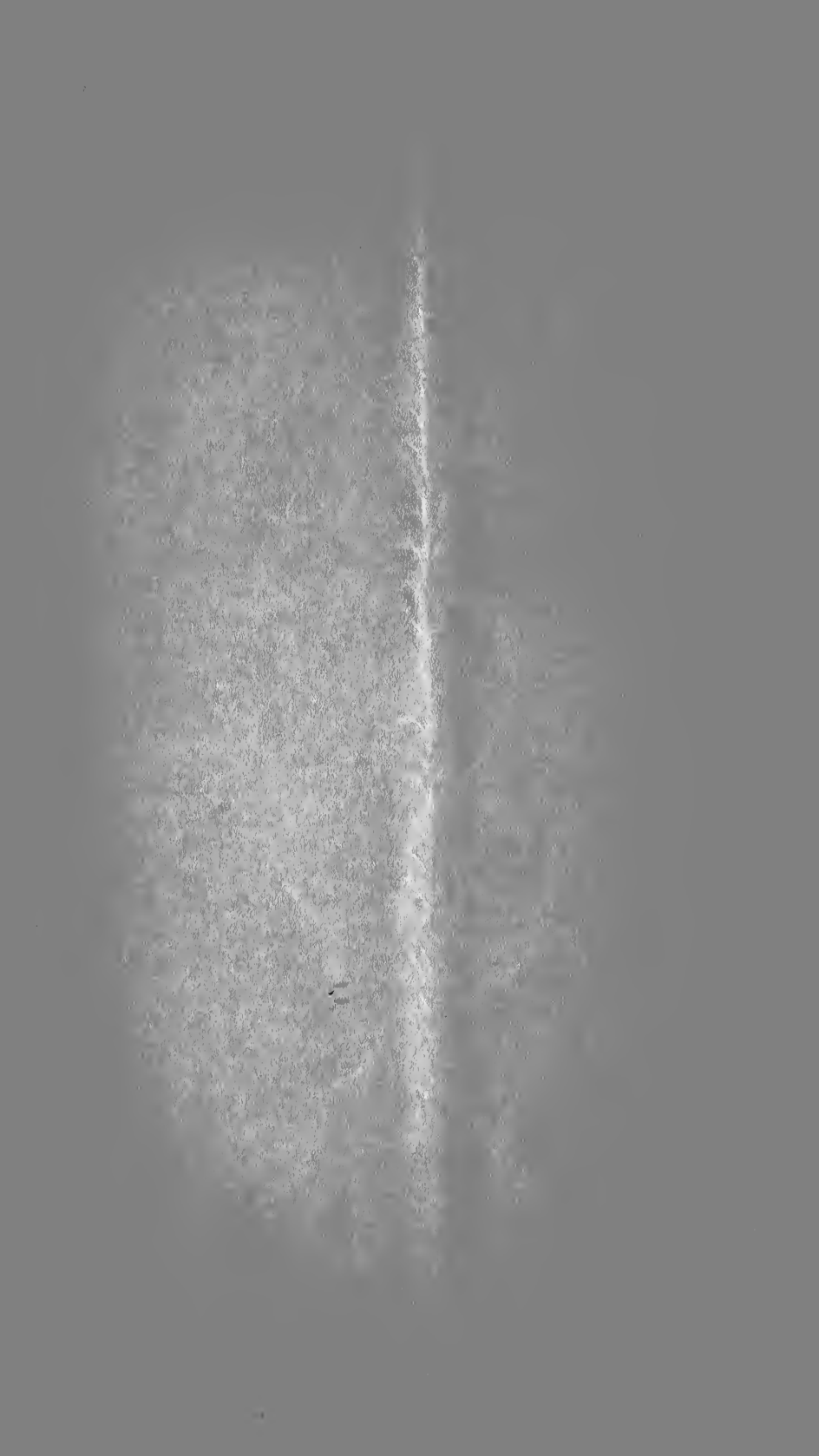
Let us, as individual citizens, do our duty—and, in the inspired words of one of St. John's noblest sons:—*

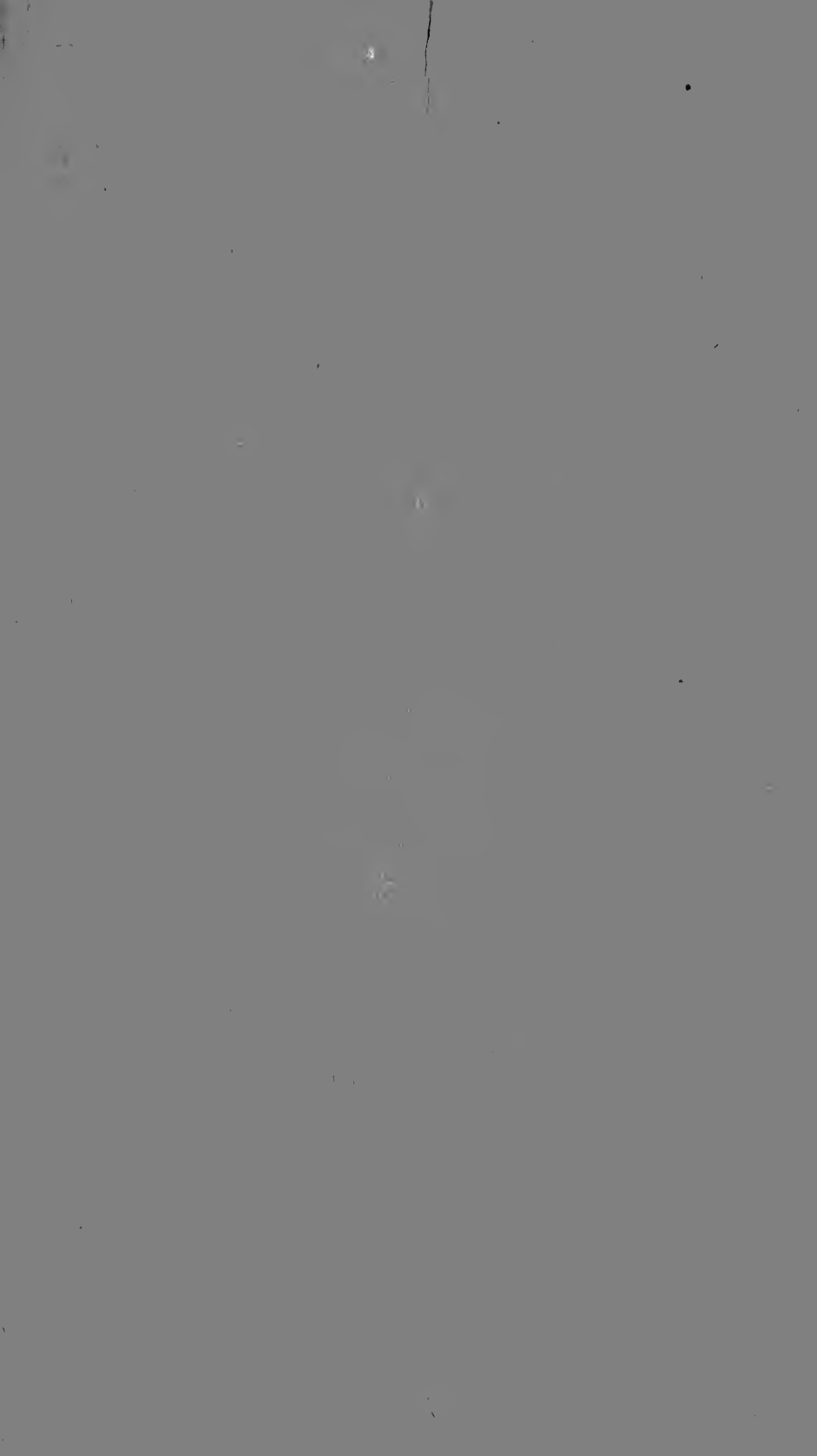
“*This* be our motto : ‘In God is our trust?’

And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!”

* Francis S. Key, Esq'r—an Alumnus of St. John's.







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